

Stories from the Honour Boards

Stories of those who served and are remembered on the Honour Boards in the Merrington Anzac Memorial Peace Chapel at Saint Andrew's Uniting Church

Booklet Number 110

ALBERT EDMUND BEECH 1892 - 1952



This booklet remains the property of Saint Andrew's Uniting Church.
Please see a Guide if you would like a copy.

Explanatory Note: Albert Beech's name is shown on the Honour Board which was dedicated on 10 September 1916 as CPL ALBERT BEACH. Though he had attained the rank of corporal in January 1916, he received promotion to sergeant in August 1916 and lieutenant in 1917. His surname was spelt "Beach" in error.

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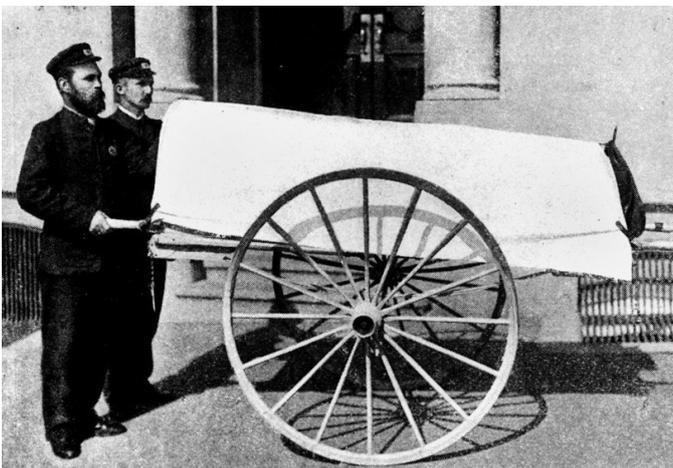
Lieutenant Albert Edmund Beech

Albert Beech was born at Youanmite in Victoria on 5 January 1892, the sixth child in a family of fourteen children of William Edmund and Maria Jane (née Williamson) Beech. Mr and Mrs Beech began their family at Mooroopna and moved to Katandra, Yarram and Youanmite in Victoria, then Finley in New South Wales before settling in Queensland at Baking Board and Chinchilla. Mr William Beech was a farmer and grazier and worked a property at Columboola. The fourteen children were born over a period of 25 years.

On 31 July 1911 Albert Beech obtained work in Brisbane at the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade in Ann Street. The headquarters building was just completed as he commenced his lifelong career. His duties included pushing patients round on a litter and his wage was 30/- (\$3) a week.



In those days the bearers were driven to a case in a sulky.



They then had to push the litter bearing the patient to the hospital.

When Albert Edmund Beech enlisted in Brisbane to serve overseas in the AIF on 21 August 1914, he was 22 years 8 months old, a single man, 6 feet (183.5 cm) in height. He nominated his father at Baking Board as next-of-kin and gave his religious denomination as Church of England. He was appointed to A Section, 3rd Field Ambulance at Enoggera Camp with an early regimental number 32. Private Beech embarked from Pinkenba Wharf on board HMAT *Rangatira* on 24 September 1914.

War service records for A E Beech reveal not only his skill in field ambulance work but also his readiness to assume responsibility and leadership. He was promoted to the rank of lance corporal while on active service with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force on Gallipoli Peninsula and returned to Alexandria on 17 December 1915. During the next year in France he was entrusted with duties as lance sergeant in 3rd Field Ambulance and Gas School instructor and served at 1st Australian Divisional Headquarters as sergeant. In April 1917 he received promotion to the rank of 2nd lieutenant on transfer to 7th Battalion.

He was wounded in August 1917 but remained on duty. On 1 January 1918 he was promoted to lieutenant and attached to the 2nd Australian Infantry Brigade Headquarters and carried out duties as Gas Officer. Lieutenant Beech returned to Australia per the ship *Burmah* in January 1919. He was medically examined in February 1919 for occasional attacks of deafness with pain in his right ear following concussion due to walking near an 18 pounder gun while firing. Lieutenant A E Beech received the 1914/15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal for his services in the AIF from 21 August 1914 to 13 April 1919.

In June 1919 Albert Beech resumed his work as an ambulance bearer at the Ann Street QATB base and by the end of the year was appointed Deputy Superintendent.

He married Olive Lavinia McDonald on 5 September 1923. The couple first lived in a flat in Gladstone Road, South Brisbane and later moved to Toowong. On his appointment to the position of superintendent and secretary of the Brisbane Centre on 1 September 1936, Mr and Mrs Beech with their daughter Dorothy Joan occupied a flat above the centre at 410 Ann Street.



Ambulance Station in Ann Street, 1924

During the Second World War, Superintendent Albert Beach was responsible for the establishment of many first aid posts in the city and suburbs. Acknowledgement of his completion of forty years' service with the ambulance brigade was given in the newspaper in 1951. He had watched the Ann Street headquarters grow from a one horse cart and twelve men to 38 wireless cars and 105 men. Then aged 59, he said he hoped to complete another six years as superintendent. Unfortunately, a heart complaint caused his death in the Brisbane Hospital on 27 October 1952.



Mr. Beech

A newspaper article paid tribute to his distinguished and devoted service to the community. "Mr Beech was regarded by his staff as a martyr to his job. They said he was the keenest ambulance man of them all and always seemed reluctant to take a day off. Though he was quietly spoken and kind, ambulance men said Mr Beech could be tough if any of his men did anything to the brigade's detriment."

At the time of Albert Beech's death, his daughter Joan was a physiotherapist at the Brisbane General Hospital. Mrs Olive Beech died in 1966.

References

National Archives of Australia, World War 1 military records

Australian War Memorial, Embarkation Rolls

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Ancestry, on line

The Courier-Mail, 1 September 1936, page 13

The Courier-Mail, 3 May 1940, page 3

The Courier-Mail, 1 August 1951, page 3

The Courier-Mail, 28 October 1952, page 3

Australian Electoral Rolls, 1912 to 1949

Compiled by Noel E Adsett

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Lest we forget